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S E C R E T PRAGUE 001571

SIPDIS

WHA FOR CALEB C. MCCARRY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2015

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH-CUBA CONFLICT IS HEATING UP

REF: A. HAVANA 21834

[1](#)B. PRAGUE 01560

Classified By: Poloff Sarah C. Peck for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Action request at paragraph 5.

[1](#)2. (S) Summary. The Czechs are concerned they will lose their mission in Cuba as part of the fall-out from the Czech National Day incident in Havana (ref A). They are therefore trying to use the incident to rally EU support at the Nov 7 GAERC, and are looking for ways to increase pressure on the Castro regime without endangering their mission. To help them form an effective strategy, they have asked the U.S. to share intelligence on the importance to the GOC of the Cuban mission in Prague. End summary.

[1](#)3. (S) Pol-Econ Chief and Poloff met on Nov. 3 with Edita Hrda, Director of the Czech MFA Americas Desk, to get an update on the Czech National Day incident in Cuba. Hrda confided that the Castro regime delivered two dip notes that caused the Czechs to fear that the GOC may expel the Czech political officer now in Havana, or worse, close the mission (among the Cuban complaints was the extensive schedule of meetings that U.S. Coordinator for Cuban Transition Caleb McCarry had in Prague, ref B). The Czechs have planned an internal strategy session next week to discuss possible actions against Cuba at the EU level, bilaterally, and in Havana. As part of this planning, the Czechs feel they need to determine how far they can push back without endangering their mission. Central to this assessment is a better sense of how important the Cuban Mission in Prague is to the Cuban government. Accordingly, Hrda asked if the USG had available any intelligence or other information on this question that we could share with the MFA.

[1](#)4. (C) The Czechs are also trying to rally support in the EU. For example, the Czechs will explain the incident over lunch at the Nov 7 GAERC meeting. They hope that an EU statement condemning GOC actions will be possible at the December GAERC. In addition, on Nov 8 the Czechs will request the COLAT working group to evaluate human rights abuses in Cuba. And, of course, Czechs will continue to push for a common EU-Cuba policy that recognizes political dissidents and provides sanctions for senior officials of the Castro regime, although Hrda was not optimistic that there would be any changes in the EU common position before next summer. Historically, most EU countries have not supported the Czech positions on Cuba. However, the Czechs expect support from the Danes, and hope the new governments in Germany and Poland will be supportive as well.

[1](#)5. (S) Comment. Some EU countries may accuse the Czechs of over-reacting to the Czech National Day incident. However, the Czechs stand to lose more than a hotel reservation. The GOC has sent signals that cause the Czechs to fear they will lose their Cuban mission. The loss of this mission would make it harder (if not impossible) for the GOCR and the Czech NGO People in Need to provide critical support to the Cuban people, and therefore would undermine important U.S. policy objectives. Post recommends providing the assistance requested by the Czechs, including sharing intelligence (to the extent it exists), and urging EU partners, in particular Germany, Poland, Denmark, Slovak Republic, and the Baltic states (see reftel B), to support the Czech EU proposals.

CABANISS